



The Florida House of Representatives

Chris Sprowls
Speaker

NEWS RELEASE

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Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls' Opening Day Address: Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 2, 2021) — In his address to the House Chamber as Florida House Speaker, Representative Chris Sprowls celebrated the Opening Day of the 90th term of the Florida Legislature.

Here is the full text of Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls' speech to the Florida Legislature on Opening Day, as prepared for delivery:

Members, when we were last together in this Chamber, I talked to you for forty minutes. Today, I'm going to talk to you for just four.

Back then, I shared my vision for our work together; I won't rehash all those points today. But I do want to take this moment to say thank you – to all of you who took me up on my invitation to start a new type of conversation in this House.

To those of you who came to my office to talk, thank you for your openness and for bringing not only your desire to speak but also a willingness to listen. For those of you who went even further and took up the gauntlet on issues – thank you.

Thank you for insisting that every child can learn to read and for believing that every child should understand how lucky they are to be an American.

Thank you for recognizing that our communities must be protected both from flooding caused by the rising seas and from intolerance created by the rising Woke agenda.

Thank you for being willing to blow up a workforce system that has forgotten how to get people work and for taking on a higher education establishment that seems more worried about social justice than about social mobility.

Thank you for looking for solutions to the failures in black maternal health care and for finding ways to right the wrongs in foster care.

Thank you for tackling the intractable problems of government accountability and ethics and for promoting laws that encourage a culture of entrepreneurship and economic freedom.

There are so many other issues and too many Members to mention all of you by name, but know that you have my admiration for your willingness to take on complicated problems and my respect for having the courage to wade into difficult fights.

Over the last decade, the House has been successful in pursuing a consistent and familiar agenda. But as we begin this new decade, I see fresh ideas in the bills that have been filed and the beginnings of a new conservative vision that empowers individuals, holds government to account and prepares Florida today for the problems of tomorrow.

Of course, all of these issues are wrapped around and reshaped by the impacts of Covid-19. We have much work to do to address the pandemic and to ensure our laws align with the real-world problems that we have encountered over the last year. I could spend another 20 minutes talking about policy, but I only have 2 minutes left.

A lot has been written and said about this Session that starts today. And much more will be written and said in the days and weeks to come. Most of it is nonsense. Nearly all of it is wrong.

Whether it's contained in a newspaper article written by a reporter too self-righteousness to be self-aware or told to you from an outside lobbyist pretending to be an insider, all this commentary has the same reductive agenda. They want to reframe Session as being about only the subset of issues that they care about, or, worse, they want to turn everything into a make-believe boxing match between the House and the Senate or the Legislature and the Governor.

This "Session" that you read about and hear about just doesn't exist. There isn't one Session. There are thousands of Sessions. Every participant in this process – from the most seasoned committee chair down to the newest freshman, from the cynical veteran lobbyist to the bright-eyed intern – each and every one will have their own experience of Session. The issues they and you work on will feel like they are at the center of this Session, and, for all intents and purposes, they are.

Session isn't a sporting event; it's more like a state fair. No two people at the fair have the same experience. The choices they make, the rides they pick or avoid; the games they play or pass; the food they eat or ignore; the people they choose to surround themselves with, or the people they choose to shun. All of those things define their experience.

And those are the things that will define each of our individual Sessions over the next 60 days.

Of those thousands of possible sessions, some could be amazing, some could be life-changing and others could hardly be worth our time. Which path we walk won't be determined by external forces. It won't be governed by some grand plan. It isn't about what's done to us or what we are allowed to do.

Our Session will be shaped by the decisions that we make, by the opportunities we seize, by our willingness to stretch, grow and take risks.

Will we be brave or boring? Will we hide inside our safe spaces where we are right and everyone else is wrong, or will we climb to find higher, common ground? Will we spend our days chasing praise on Twitter, or will we actually change policy to improve the lives of Floridians? Will we have the capacity to recognize that while we are at the center of our own sessions, we are not at the center of everyone else's? Those choices rest entirely with each of us.

In the few short months since we began this journey together, we have transformed this House. We have asked our staff to lift you up. We have asked our committee and subcommittee chairs to collaborate with you. We have improved communication in the House and opened up the committee process in new ways. We have endeavored to keep you safe amid the pandemic. We have embraced our freshmen and worked to make sure they are the best-trained class in legislative history.

But all of that is prologue and preparation. Here, on Day 1 of Session, is where and when it truly begins.

The privilege of this job, of being your Speaker, is that I get to sit at the center of this vast, unmappable Venn diagram and glimpse, briefly, into each of your individual sessions. And from where I'm standing, I see so much potential and so many opportunities. I see so much promise in this room.

The door is open; Session is here. The decisions are yours. It's time to win the day. What happens next is up to you. Choose wisely.

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